

Message Text

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15

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 AF-06 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1911

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 0440

DEPT PASS ALL ARAB CAPITALS, ANKARA, LONDON, MOSCOW
AND TEHRAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IZ, SY

SUBJECT: EUPHRATES WATER CONFLICT

1. ALTHOUGH BASIC SYRIAN-IRAQI CONFLICT IS HISTORICAL AND
POLITICAL, IRAQI ATTENTION IS RIVETED THESE DAYS ON SYRIA'S
WITHOLDING OF EUPHRATES RIVER WATER WHICH AFFECTS 2 TO 3
MILLION PEOPLE. GOI HAS ATTEMPTED TO MOBILIZE PUBLIC OPINION
AGAINST SYRIA AND LAUNCHED MAJOR EFFORT TO GAIN SUPPORT OF OTHER
ARAB STATES BY DISPATCHING PRESIDENTIAL ENVOYS TO ARAB CAPITOLS
IN PREPARATION FOR SPECIAL ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING
IN CAIRO APRIL 21.

2. INDEPENDENT SOURCES, INCLUDING UN OFFICIALS, AMERICAN
ARCHEOLOGIST, AND BRITISH IRRIGATION EXPERT, ATTEST ON BASIS OF
PERSONAL OBSERVATION THAT PROBLEM IS VERY SERIOUS AND NOT
FABRICATED BY GOI.

3. GOI HAS PUBLISHED DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF ALLEGED BROKEN PRO-
VISIONAL AGREEMENTS BY SYRIA COMPLETE WITH STATISTICS ON WATER
FLOW (ASSUME PUBLISHED FBIS). FIGURES SHOW INTER ALIA THAT FROM
MARCH 26 UNTIL APRIL 13 FLOW AT IRAQI-SYRIAN BORDER WAS BETWEEN
220 AND 270 CUBIC METERS PER SECOND (AVERAGE 247) WHILE SYRIA
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WAS UTILIZING 286 TO 668 CUBIC METERS PER SECOND (AVERAGE

510). IRAQ CLAIMS THE SYRIAN REQUIREMENTS AMOUNT TO ONLY 25 PERCENT OF IRAQI REQUIREMENTS AS ESTIMATED BY IRBD AND SOVIET EXPERTS.

4. COMMENT: REFERENCE TO SOVIET EXPERTS IS FIRST PUBLIC MENTION OF POSSIBLE SOVIET ROLE IN THIS CONFLICT. SUBJECT WAS NOT MENTIONED HERE AS TOPIC OF DISCUSSION DURING SADDAM HUSSEIN'S APRIL 14-15 VISIT TO MOSCOW. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS BELIEVED THAT AS EARLY AS MID-1960'S WHEN SYRIAN-SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS FOR DAM WERE UNDERWAY IRAQI REGIME HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN AND RECEIVED RUSSIAN ASSURANCES THAT IRAQ'S INTERESTS WOULD BE PROTECTED. IF SOVIETS IN FACT GAVE AREF REGIME SUCH ASSURANCES THEY ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE RENEWED THEM WITH BAATH REGIME. BASIS FOR SYRIAN ACTION IS NOT CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD HERE AND EMBASSY DAMASCUS COMMENT REQUESTED.
LOWRIE

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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